

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5563

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Human Services & Corrections, February 9, 2007  
Ways & Means, March 5, 2007

**Title:** An act relating to home visits by mental health professionals.

**Brief Description:** Providing backup for mental health professionals doing home visits.

**Sponsors:** Senators Hargrove, Stevens, Keiser, Rockefeller, Roach, Regala, Fairley, Shin, Swecker, Kauffman, Kilmer, McAuliffe, Kohl-Welles, Tom, Murray, Zarelli, Carrell, Franklin, Kastama, Delvin, Poulsen, Kline, Rasmussen, Oemig, Benton, Haugen and Spanel.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Human Services & Corrections: 2/02/07, 2/09/07 [DP-WM].  
Ways & Means: 3/05/07, 3/05/07 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Regala, Vice Chair; Stevens, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Carrell, Marr and McAuliffe.

**Staff:** Indu Thomas (786-7459)

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair, Capital Budget Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair, Operating Budget; Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Carrell, Fairley, Hatfield, Hobbs, Honeyford, Keiser, Kohl-Welles, Oemig, Parlette, Rasmussen, Regala, Roach, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Tom.

**Staff:** Tim Yowell (786-7435)

**Background:** There are designated mental health professionals (DMHPs) who perform initial evaluations and detentions pursuant to the involuntary commitment statutes and provide crisis outreach services for individuals with mental disorders. DMHPs occasionally evaluate people for involuntary detention or provide crisis outreach services in the homes of individuals with mental disorders.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Summary of Bill:** DMHPs or other mental health crisis outreach workers will not be required to conduct home visits alone. Employers will equip mental health workers who engage in home visits with a communication device. Mental health workers dispatched on crisis outreach visits will have prompt access to any history of dangerousness or potential dangerousness on the client they are visiting, if available. All community mental health workers who work directly with clients will be provided with annual training on safety and violence prevention.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Human Services & Corrections):** PRO: People grappling with mental illness are not inherently more dangerous than the public overall. Designated mental health professionals and other community mental health workers interact with clients when they are in crisis. An increasing number of community mental health workers have reported feeling unsafe on the job. The death of Marty Smith, an experienced mental health worker who was murdered by a client on a home visit, is an extreme example of a more pervasive problem, workplace violence against community mental health workers. Not long ago there was an incident at the Kitsap Mental Health Psychiatric Unit. All of the staff finished their shift in the emergency room. Community mental health workers are concerned about inadequate training and back-up. Workers need training in violence prevention, cell phones so that they can contact law enforcement when necessary, and information regarding the clients that they are called upon to assess.

OTHER: Funding for increasing this type of service must be provided to the regional support networks or it will be diverted from other direct services. The issue is not who goes out to see people in crisis but rather how do we provide treatment to those people before they end up in crisis.

**Persons Testifying (Human Services & Corrections):** PRO: Jonathan Rosenblum, Barbara Tucker, Jim Leamon, August Croy, Yolanda Smith, Seattle and Service Employees International Union 199NW; Richard Kellogg, Mental Health Division; Jean Wessman, Association of Counties.

OTHER: Dave Stewart, Pierce County Regional Support Network.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means):** PRO: Service Employees International Union (SEIU) has worked closely with providers, regional support networks, the Department of Social and Health Services, and legislators during the interim to make changes and clarifications to similar legislation that did not pass the Senate last year. The most significant change is that doubling up of staff is now permissive, rather than mandatory in all cases, and the second responder can be a police officer, paramedic, or firefighter.

**Persons Testifying (Ways & Means):** PRO: Jonathan Rosenblum, SEIU Local 1199 Campaign for Qualify Mental Health Care.